

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With James and Sarah Brady November 2, 1993

Crime and Handgun Legislation

Q. Jim, is the crime bill going to pass?

The President. He asked you. Yes, it's going to pass. What do you think, Jim? He wants to know if the crime bill's going to pass and the Brady bill. That's what Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press] asked you.

Mr. Brady. Well, this is your house, so I'll defer to you, sir.

The President. I already said yes. You answer it.

Q. In that case, Mr. President, I'm wondering if you could tell us what the Brady bill would do in urban areas, like the District of Columbia, where the guns that kill people are not sold so much in shops but more on the street, where there's not much of a waiting—

The President. But they all do come out of regular manufacturers, and they come into the country. And what the Brady bill would do, it would make uniform the losing battle a lot of States are fighting now, because they're all alone, to at least check those people who do buy from registered gun dealers. And there are an enormous number of people who do have criminal backgrounds, who have mental health problems, who don't even meet any kind of age requirement. We would be able to check all that uniformly, nationwide. We find now that in a lot of States that have pretty strict gun laws, an enormous percentage of the guns that are confiscated by law enforcement officials every year come from other States that don't.

So we do have some evidence that these laws work, but it's not the end-all and be-all. We've got a couple hundred million guns out there. There are a lot of other problems that we need to deal with in terms of minors in possession, in terms of assault weapons, in terms of the way the permitting process works for Federal arms dealers.

But the Brady bill is the first step. And we are going to pass it this year, I believe, because the American people finally have heard the long call of Jim and Sarah Brady. They've been out here on this for years and years and years, often-times alone with no support. And finally, thanks to the leadership of the Members of Congress who are here and others, we're going to be able to put it over.

Q. Does it go far enough?

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—enough votes—*

The President. To pass it? I believe we clearly have the votes to pass it if we can get it to the floor. Mr. Schumer got it out of the House subcommittee last week, and we're hoping that the House committee will mark it up this week. Senator Biden's going to bring it up separate from the crime bill so that no one will be able to hide behind other issues in trying to find clever ways to filibuster it. And I compliment him on that. And I just believe that the time has come.

And you read all these stories, like the story that was in the Washington Post yesterday of the children planning for their funerals. I think it's going to be very difficult for the Congress to justify continued inaction on what millions of Americans believe is the number one problem in their lives.

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—on the Newsday report saying that—[inaudible]—campaign?*

The President. First of all, we did nothing improper, and I have nothing to say about it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:10 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Former White House Press Secretary James Brady was wounded in the 1981 assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan. His wife, Sarah, was head of Handgun Control, Inc. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.